

Program Notice

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9-19-01

REVISED QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY CONTROL TOLERANCES

1. PURPOSE

Effective October 1, 2001, the Federal Grain Inspection Service is revising established Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) inspection tolerances for grain and establishing tolerances for graded commodities, where none existed, to accurately reflect inspection capabilities.

2. BACKGROUND

Existing QA/QC data were thoroughly analyzed to establish the new inspection tolerances. Tolerances are based on actual variation observed between original and review results. The sources of variation include sampling, visual interpretation, and mechanical capability. Sample variation for visually determined factors are established using average kernel counts and established portion sizes for each grain and commodity. Where observed variability exceeded sampling variability for visually determined factors, allowances were provided for the visual variability.

Warning and action levels remain at approximately 10 and 0.1 percent respectively. Therefore, we would expect no more than 10 out of 100 samples to exceed the warning levels and 1 in 1000 samples to exceed the action level due to random variation and system capability.

3. ANTICIPATED EFFECT

The tolerance revisions will more closely align the official inspection system with current capabilities and promote continuous improvement. Some tolerances are reduced and others slightly relaxed. For example, moisture tolerances are narrowed to reflect the improved precision of the new moisture instrument, while some visually interpreted factors are expanded to account for inspection variation. A comparison of tolerances using grain data from May 1, 1999, indicates the revised tolerances will increase the warning and action occurrences by 0.4 and 0.1 percent, respectively.

4. QUESTIONS

Direct any questions to the Data and Information Analysis Branch at (202) 720-0228.

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